



## Mobile Scheme to Quit Tobacco

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The **World Health Organization's (WHO) report on global tobacco epidemic**, launched in July 2019 makes a special reference about **mCessation programme** and other initiatives of India for helping smokers quit.

- The 2019 report is the seventh in a series that tracks the status of tobacco epidemic and interventions to combat it.
- Released in Brazil, the report states that **India is the second largest consumer of tobacco products**, with more than 200 million users of smokeless tobacco and 276 million consumers of tobacco overall.
- The programme has shown strong outcomes in terms of health and outreach, and provides a huge opportunity to help several million tobacco users who want to quit.
- In 2017, a **Global Adult Tobacco Survey** found that 38.5 percent of adult smokers and 33.2 per cent adult users of smokeless forms of tobacco had attempted to quit, the report noted.

## About mCessation Programme

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- It is an initiative **using mobile technology** for tobacco cessation.
- India launched mCessation using text messages in 2016 as part of the government's **Digital India initiative**. It uses two-way messaging between the individual seeking to quit tobacco use and programme specialists providing them dynamic support.
- The **National Tobacco Control Programme** and the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, with support from the WHO and the International Telecommunication Union's '**Be [email protected], Be mobile**' initiative, implemented the programme.

### Be [email protected], Be mobile' initiative

- Be [email protected], Be Mobile initiative harnesses the power and reach of mobile phones to address the **noncommunicable disease (NCD)** risk factors by educating people to make healthier lifestyle choices to help prevent and manage NCDs via their phones.

- The initiative uses mobile phone technology to deliver disease prevention and management information directly to mobile phone users, and strengthens health systems by providing training to health workers.
- The programme allows people who want to quit tobacco use to register by giving a missed call to a dedicated national number.
- The programme's progress is **monitored in real-time** through an online dashboard that details the number of registrations.
- Till date, the programme has over 2.1 million self-registered users.
- An evaluation conducted by the Health ministry found an average quitting rate of 7 per cent for both smokers and users of smokeless tobacco six months after enrollment.
- The government has recently released **version-2** of the "mTobaccoCessation" platform, which can deliver content through SMS or interactive voice response in 12 languages.
- MCessation should be included in PHC (Primary Health Care)-level advice to enable maximum reach.
- Since 2007, the Union Health ministry is pushing to introduce stronger **graphic health warnings on tobacco packets**, with mixed success.

## Significance of graphic warning on tobacco packs

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- Over half the world's population - or 3.9 billion people living in 91 countries - benefit from large graphic health warnings, and **India is among the countries with the highest level of achievement**, the WHO report notes.
- While there has been no India-specific evaluation, studies from several countries that introduced similar strong labels have shown that this policy has been **most effective in reducing tobacco use among the youth, and also in motivating users to quit.**

**Source: IE**